

FAMILIAL TRAFFICKING

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, MSW, Ph.D.



**Office of Sex Trafficking
Intervention Research**

INTRODUCTIONS

**Dr. Dominique
Roe-Sepowitz**

Director of
Office of Sex Trafficking
Intervention Research

OBJECTIVES

- Become familiar with the terminology and definition
- Identify potential indicators for familial trafficking
- Identify tactics for control and justifications for actions
- Understand impact on victim
- Be confident in how to help as service providers and allied professionals

CONTENT WARNING

The material presented here is sometimes difficult to hear about and can cause upsetting feelings.

Have a plan. Who can you talk to after this presentation?

GENDER, RACE & COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Gender

Most research focuses on girls and women. We know boys, men, and transgender people are impacted.

Race

Available data details that victims are most often POC. This is multi-layered and based on systemic racism and discrimination.

Cognitive Development

Individuals who have atypical cognitive development are at a higher risk for exploitation and trafficking.



DEFINITION

Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000)

The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, and/or obtaining of a person for:

- Labor or services, through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.
- Commercial sex act(s) through force, fraud, or coercion.
- Any commercial sex act if the person is under eighteen years of age, regardless of whether any form of force, fraud, or coercion is involved.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ACT (CAPTA) IN 2015

In 2015, the Federal definitions of “child abuse and neglect” and “sexual abuse” were expanded by the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act to include a child who is identified as a victim of sex trafficking or severe forms of trafficking in persons.

- Into effect in 2017

ALTERNATIVE TERMINOLOGY

- Familial trafficking
- Family-facilitated trafficking
- Family-controlled trafficking
- Relative trafficking



SEX VS. LABOR TRAFFICKING

2021 Reported Traffickers	LABOR		SEX		SEX & LABOR		SEX + SEX & LABOR	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Employer	757	57%	76	3%	29	15%	105	4%
Family Member/Caregiver	144	11%	1085	45%	59	30%	1144	44%
Intimate Partner	73	5%	953	40%	60	31%	1013	39%
Friend/Acquaintance/Coworker	131	10%	161	7%	11	6%	172	7%

 1st (top reported)
  2nd
  3rd

Polaris (2021). Analysis of 2021 data from the national human trafficking hotline.

PREVALANCE & TYPOLOGY IN U.S.

Anywhere from 3-44% of child sex trafficking is perpetuated by a family member.

2021 Polaris data indicates that a parent/caregiver was facilitating the trafficking for 33% of the national human trafficking hotline cases.

Internationally, it is estimated that 41% of child trafficking is perpetuated by a family member.

- Most often child's biological mother (~65%)
 - In cases where the mother was the trafficker, a second trafficker was involved 65% of the time
- Geographical Distribution
 - Out of 31 cases, 45.2% trafficking originated in rural areas, second highest was metropolitan areas at 38.7%
- Movement
 - In call, out call, street, CSA parties and venues
 - "Vacations"
- Online exploitation

FAMILIAL TRAFFICKING EXPERIENCES

- Age of victimization
 - Exploitation by relatives ranged from 4 to 16 years old; non-relatives 11 to 17
 - Grooming/Seasoning
 - Cultural
 - Intergenerational
 - “This happened to me and now it is your turn.”
- Race and Ethnicity
- Gender
 - Mostly women and girls
- Sexuality

IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE
NO MATTER RACE, AGE OR GENDER



Table 4: Economic Exchange in Half to All Familial Trafficking Cases (n = 917)

Percentage	Economic Exchange
75.4%	Sex acts with the minor were exchanged for drugs
69.8%	Sex acts with the minor were exchanged for cash
60.3%	Sex acts with the minor were exchanged for material goods or services
33.3%	The minor was forced to perform sex acts live on camera
28.6%	The minor was used to facilitate the manufacture of pornography
15.4%	The minor was exchanged for sex among family members only
16.3%	Sex acts with the minor were exchanged for protection

Allert, J. L. (2021). A National Study of Prevalence, Characteristics, and Challenges across the Justice Process

TESTIMONY

Kelly's biological father had a serious grudge against women, which fueled his abuse of her mother and eventually of her. Just as she was turning one, her father began to physically and sexually abuse her. **Over time, he allowed his acquaintances to abuse her as well.** Those illicit encounters became "their secret."

He covered his tracks - using grooming techniques - telling her this was a way to show him her love, that it was something all little girls did. He also used threats - telling her if she talked, he would kill her mother, brother and (maternal) grandparents. He twisted the truth - telling her she would go to jail for doing "dirty things" and that her mom and family would be ashamed to know her if they knew how bad she was.

At just 15 years old, she spoke out, went to court, and testified against her biological father.

CASE STUDY

On an Arizona Native American Reservation, Client R reported that when she was five years old her uncle began to sexually abuse her. **He sold her to their neighbors in their small community for drugs and money.** Her mother was using drugs and did not see what was happening. Client R thought what was happening was normal. When she turned 12, her uncle started to molest her little sister. Client R started acting out, rebelling, and became addicted to substances.

She was identified as a familial sex trafficking survivor in a drug treatment program at age 22.

RISK FACTORS

FAMILIAL TRAFFICKING

- Family instability
- Poverty
- Special education attendance
- History of abuse
- Substance use
- Trauma and abuse
- Child welfare involvement
- History of running away

Table 1. Presence of Risk Factors in All or Most Cases.

Percentage	Factor
54.3	Suggestion or evidence of verbal, emotional, and spiritual abuse
52.8	Single parent household
47.0	Suggestion or evidence of neglect
45.7	Acute poverty
45.7	Housing instability
41.7	Absent or nonexistent father
40.3	Substance use/addiction in the family
38.2	Suggestion or evidence of other forms of childhood sexual abuse
37.8	Other criminal activity in the home
28.6	Suggestion or evidence of domestic violence

- Poor mental health, inconsistent behaviors, & lack of control
- May be fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid
- Lack of understanding for developmentally appropriate things
- Tries to act older than peers or mental age
- Frequent mood swings
- Sexually promiscuous
- May have vague answers; have been taught to hide secrets
- May have non-evident injuries that affect physical activity
- Isolated & poor communication skills
- Appears tired & unable to keep up in studies
- Is not allowed or able to speak for themselves

KEY BEHAVIORAL IDENTIFIERS

- Constant cover up for abuser, self-shaming/blaming
- Lack of understanding and education about bodily functions, rape, incest, sexual abuse
- Hold programming or cultural beliefs about their situation



WHY DON'T THEY JUST LEAVE?

Trafficker establishes control in the relationship

Trafficker wields complete control to induce commercial sex acts or forced labor

Complex emotional relationship formed

Emotional Manipulation
Feigned Affection
Cultural Beliefs
Debt
Physical and Emotional Abuse

Trauma bond is developed by the victim as a survival strategy

PROGRAMMING & INDOCTRINATION

"You are a worthless human being. You deserve to be abused."

"If you don't work who will take care of the family?"

"You cannot survive on your own. You are tied to the family forever.
Without the family, you will die."

"If you step out against the family, consequences will be unforgiving if not
physical."

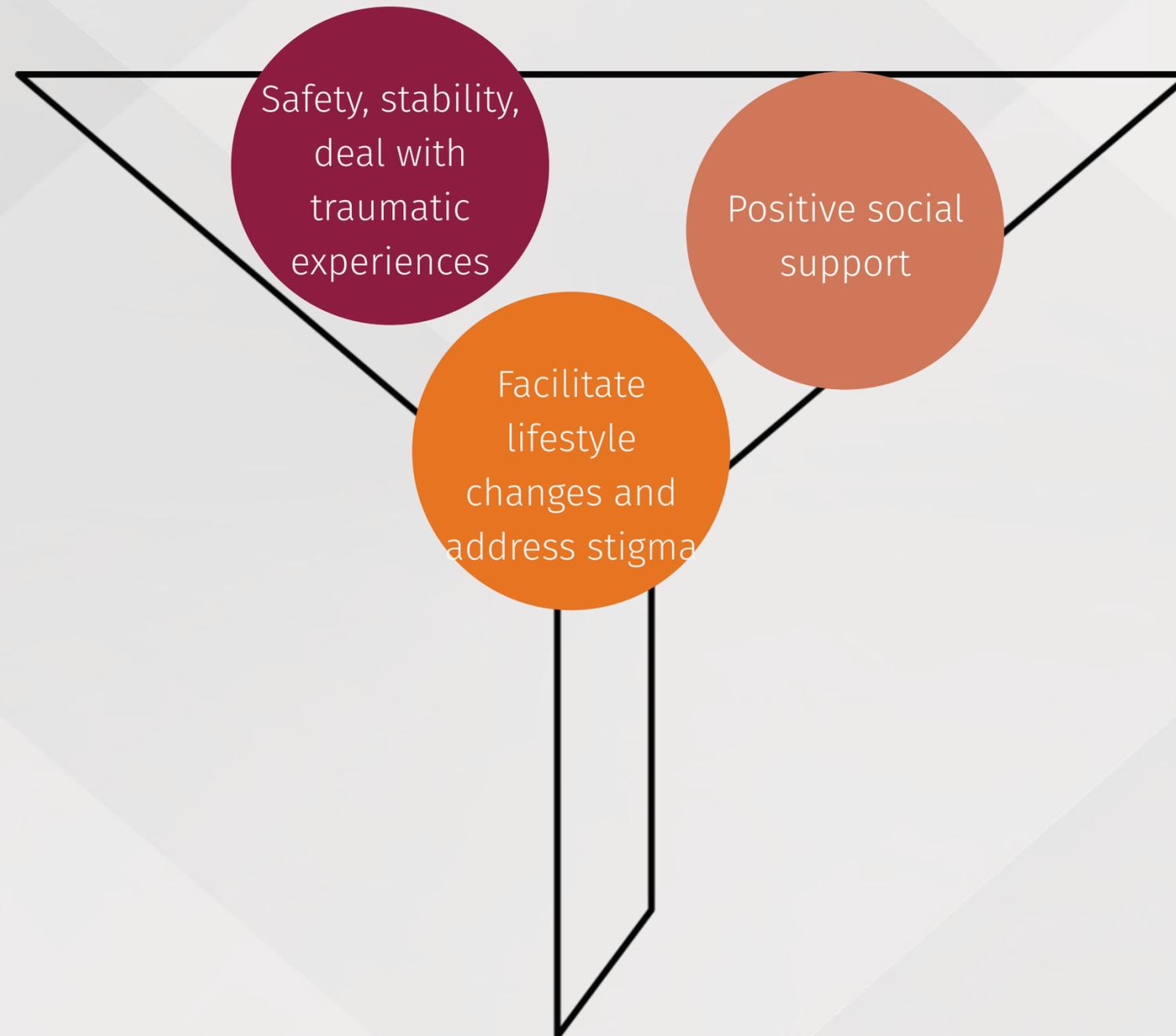
"Nobody on the outside can be trusted."

TOP CHALLENGES IN MINOR FAMILIAL TRAFFICKING CASES

For justice to have an opportunity, there must be a breach in the law and sufficient evidence to prove the offense. There are many factors impacting this:

- Minor is unwilling to testify
- There is not enough evidence to prosecute these cases
- Minor's testimony is not believed
- Laws are not written with family perpetrators in mind
- We have no or inadequate options for placement

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH



Trauma-informed care

WHO HAS BEEN FOUND TO BE MOST INFLEUNTIAL?



Cases are more likely to be reported by anonymous community members rather than by professionals, like teachers, health-care providers, social workers, law enforcement officers, etc., who work with vulnerable populations.

FORENSIC INTERVIEWING

- Gather information in an age- and developmentally- appropriate manner
 - Non-coercive
 - Objective and neutral
 - Open-ended questions
 - Cannot be leading questions
- Helps minimize the number of times a child is interviewed
- First step in child protective service (CPS) investigations

HOW TO HELP

**If someone is in immediate danger
Call 9-1-1**

- “Can you come and go as you please?”
- “Has anyone ever paid someone else to have sex with you?”
- “Do you have to work to contribute money to your family?”
- “Have you ever had to do things in order to get things from your family?”
- “Has anyone ever taken pictures of you and put them on the internet?”
- “Have you been physically harmed in any way?”
- “Are you safe where you are staying?”

HOW CAN WE MOVE FORWARD?

- **Believe victim testimony**
- **Accurately identify and label cases of familial trafficking**
 - Abuse, neglect, or other offenses ultimately hinder service mapping
- **Tailored comprehensive programs specific to familial victims**
 - Focusing on trauma and attachment to facilitate “deprogramming”
 - Age-appropriate
 - Cultural considerations
- **Full-time human trafficking investigator in the child welfare system**
 - Creating multidisciplinary teams with specializations in family-controlled trafficking
 - Social service agencies, child advocacy centers, victim advocates/guardian ad litem, victim service providers, and interaction with other law enforcement agencies
- **Better training for law enforcement**

THANK YOU

